

AH SO: THE ASIAN CHARACTER ON HISTORIC RADIO BROADCASTS

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The golden years of radio spanned a thirty year period dating from the late 1920s to the late 1950s. During this period, most of the information and media entertainment people received about world events was transmitted through, and affected by, what was portrayed on radio. On most broadcasts, the producer and director had between 20 and 25 minutes (not including commercials) to present a story. Therefore, there was not time to develop complex characters with subtle personal qualities. Established racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, and occupational stereotypes grounded in the traditions and beliefs of society allowed the director to create a number of fairly precise images without using much air time. Directors resorted to the use of these stereotypes in order to move quickly into the story line. Radio, therefore, was a mechanism that not only reflected the general values and beliefs held by society at a specific moment in history, but helped perpetuate these stereotypes.

The case of the Asian American or Oriental is of particular interest because many of the stereotypes were so contradictory in nature. Asians have elicited very different reactions from Americans over the years. Initially brought to the United States as a source of cheap labor for the transcontinental railroads and mines, the hard working, noncomplaining Oriental was soon seen as a threat to local labor forces. The Asians' values, visibility, and propensity to restrict interactions to their own people tended to isolate them from the dominant white society. This self-imposed isolation, coupled with the declining need for cheap labor, resulted in a growing concern that the country might be overrun by Orientals if strict immigration quotas

were not implemented.

This paper highlights the quandary many Americans experienced during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The Asian's values and customs were both a source of admiration and concern, if not actual fear. The inability of many Americans to read the subtle body language of the Asian gave rise to the general perception of the Oriental as unemotional, unprovokable, hard working, philosophical, and stoic. In a contest of wills or in the game of life, the Asian played by rules foreign to the American. Family fidelity, cultural ethnocentrism, and the apparent reluctance of the Asian to become Americanized raised questions of their national allegiance. For example, the fact that the color white rather than black was the sign of mourning; the family of origin rather than the individual is the focus of attention; and, the wishes of the Asian community, both in the United States and overseas, directed the individual's actions were just a few of the differences that set the Oriental at odds with other Americans. Therefore, when the United States went to war with Japan, it was generally assumed that the loyalties of the Japanese American would be with their country of origin rather than with their adopted country. It was this belief that resulted in virtually every Japanese American being rounded up and placed in "relocation camps" despite the fact that there were no overt or concrete acts to justify this incarceration. In contrast, there were a considerable number of known Nazi sympathizers in this country who were not arrested or even seriously harassed after the United States declared war on Germany.

In this paper the author examines various historic radio series in which Asians starred, appeared, or were the subject. The objective of the paper is to identify the general traits associated with the Asian character, and the general societal level attitudes portrayed on historic radio about the Asian. The paper is divided into two sections. The first section examines the series with Asians as central characters, specifically Charlie Chan, Mr. I. A. Moto, and Dr. Fu Manchu. The second section examines the Asian character as portrayed in subordinate roles in various series. The author cannot report on every series that mentioned or used an Oriental as a component of the story line, but the examples reported in the paper are illustrative of the way Asians were generally portrayed on radio during this time period.

The Asian as a Major Star in a Series

Mr. Moto was a short run series broadcast during 1951, the Korean War era, and reflected both the prevalent preoccupation with the threat of international Communism and an ambivalent attitude toward the Japanese with whom we had been at war only six years earlier. The announcer would set the stage for each show by observing;

"Mr. I. A. Moto, the world's greatest detective philosopher, a man of mystery, of culture, and sensitivity, a man who, while hating violence, fights Communism ruthlessly at home and abroad with his courage, his brains, and his fabulous knowledge of international persons, places and things"(5-20-51).

"Coupling his firm belief in the principles of freedom with his acute ability to perceive an enemy, Mr. Moto wages a ruthless war against all men who would secretly extinguish the light of liberty with the foul breath of tyranny" (7-15-51).

Later in the series and probably reacting to criticism by some irate listeners concerning the starring of that little "Jap" on American radio, the announcer would stress that Mr. Moto was Japanese-American and that his Japanese heritage provided him with a unique understanding of the human condition, but that his ultimate loyalty was to America and the democratic principles upon which it was established.

"With the straightforwardness of his American heritage and with the subtlety of his Oriental ancestors, Mr. Moto is fighting Communism" (5-27-51).

To demonstrate that his loyalties are with America and not Japan, the question of Mr. Moto's feelings about America's use of atomic weapons was raised.

Scientist: "As an Oriental you cannot help feel revulsion against the thing that maimed so many innocent people in Japan."

Mr. Moto: "Yes, atomic weapons are a very evil force, but in the world today they are a very necessary force" (10-31-51).

It is apparent that the directors of the show felt that Mr. Moto needed to prove that he was not only a loyal American, but also held to a deep and abiding belief in God. Though his religious orientation was not explicitly identified, observations during many shows implied

that his views were compatible with that of the Christian tradition. In the following account, a woman's husband had been kidnapped. Mr. Moto asked if she was religious. When she answered in the affirmative, he responded:

"I suggest you pray. God has often proved mankind's most powerful ally"(7-15-51).

Mr. Moto does not repudiate his Asian traditions totally. As he contemplates a perplexing problem, he "prays to his ancestors for guidance." He observes that his uncanny skill in identifying criminals is due to "... the natural suspicion of the Oriental mind." When he suddenly recognizes that he has overlooked a key clue, he resorts to an oriental form of self-chastisement, "I am an idiot, the son of ten thousand idiots." Mr. Moto's primary weapon is his mind which is sharp and lightning fast. However, when forced and as a last resort, he will use martial arts.

Mr. Moto has a distinctive oriental accent. The timbre of his voice is low and mellow and he speaks clearly and precisely. Scattered throughout his conversation are bits of philosophical insights gleaned from his oriental background.

"Eminent Japanese sage once said, "He who has a choice has troubles."

"Where profit is, loss is hidden nearby."

"Vengeance is a dish best served cold."

"Who is there that can make muddy waters clean?
But, if left alone, it will become clear of itself."

"The window of a man's soul is clearest in a man's own house."

Mr. Moto has little formal education, but what he sees or reads is remembered and can be recall when needed. A tiny lump of clay is immediately recognized as coming from the lowest levels of the Roman Catacombs. By observing the method a burglar uses to break into a house, he is able to identify the perpetrator. He is a very shrewd judge of character and is able to imply motivation from very minute changes in facial expression.

The oriental character in this series is in such control of his emotions that he appears to lack feelings. To counteract this impression, the directors would introduce dialog such as:

Female Chinese character: "So many people seem to think that we Orientals are without feelings. You know that it is not true."

Mr. Moto: "I know that only too well..."

Mr. Moto is a philosophical type who intones appropriate epigrams that bear a strong resemblance to the sayings of Confucius. Usually the program draws to a close with a quotation by Mr. Moto such as: "May sleep fall upon your lidded eyes as lightly as the falling of an autumn leaf and may your dreams be as the fragrance of sandalwood in the clear air of an October morning". Mr. Moto also prepares the listener for the theme of his next case by quoting something like, "He who tells a falsehood dies a bit every day..."

The Asian star as portrayed in this series combines the intellectual intuitiveness of Eastern mysticism with the cool and calculated knowledge of the industrialized West. The result is the image of the inscrutable Oriental whose roots, beliefs, and orientations lie in the East, although he lives and works in the West.

Charlie Chan

Like Mr. Moto, Charlie Chan is diminutive in size but is an intellectual giant who combines the wisdom of the East with Western pragmatism. Even his name implies a merger of the West--Charlie--with the East--Chan. Charlie Chan appeared on radio in one form or another from December 1932 to May 1933, 1937 to 1938, 1944 to 1945 and from 1945 to 1948.

During the 1945-1948 series, Charlie Chan was attempting to get an elderly Chinese servant to confess some duplicity in his attempt to protect his employers. In the following account Charlie appealed to the man's ancestral beliefs, his family of origin, his memories of home, and his ethnic loyalties to get him to reveal the truth.

Charlie Chan: "You and I Honorable Sing, are of the same race, the same people. Why then should a thousand hills rise between us when we talk?"

Ah Sing: "Ah, they are hills you put there with your white valley ways."

Charlie Chan: "I am so sorry. They are imaginary. Let us sweep them away. How many years did you have when you came to this alien land?"

Ah Sing: "How many years? Let me see, ah" (mutters to self in Chinese), "Ah Sing have 18 years, now I got 78."

Charlie Chan: "Then Ah Sing, for 60 years you have carried another man's heaven upon your head, and your feet have trod upon another man's earth. Do you not long to return to your China, Ancient one?"

Ah Sing: "Someday, perhaps ..." (Switches to Chinese.)

Charlie Chan: "Ah yes, perhaps someday. But when a man takes off his slippers tonight, how does he know that he will put them on again in the morning? Death comes, Ah Sing."

Ah Sing: "My bones return, my bones return to lie with my fathers."

Charlie Chan: "Yes, that is indeed much. But to see again the village where you were born, to walk again the same paths, to feel under your bare feet the same earth where, Ancient One, your bones are to rest. To smell again the ginger, to listen to the chatter of little children, to hear once again the song of the Yellow River."

Ah Sing: "No can do, no can do. Too muchy work in thisa place."

Charlie Chan: "Do not despair. Fate settles all things, and all things arrive at their appointed time."

Ah Sing: "Yes."

Charlie Chan: "If one were to tell me the truth he might, who knows, live again these ten thousand delights within the shadow of the Great Wall."

Ah Sing: "To tell the truth, ah, ah, what's the matter? You crazy? Ah Sing all the time speak the truth. You try make the fool of Ah Sing. Ah Sing go now, too mucha work, too mucha work..."

This quote and the one that follows suggests that the heart and allegiance of the Asian lies in Asia. Asia is the real home while America is alien and will always remain alien to the true Asian. Yet,

Ah Sing's comments imply that he has found a place in America, a new home, and the allegiance he once held for China is now invested in his current employers. This quote also highlights the differences between the stars and supporting Asian characters. Even after living in the United States for 60 years, Ah Sing's English is broken. His primary language is still Chinese and, when reflecting, Ah Sing reverts to Chinese. Perhaps it was this factor that suggested to Charlie Chan that Ah Sing's orientation was to China, rather than to this country. On the other hand, Charlie Chan spoke impeccable English with a slight Oriental accent. At the end of each episode, the announcer would ask Charlie Chan for a concluding thought. The following summarizes his thoughts about his discussion with Ah Sing.

Naturally, Mr. Wilson, my conversation with Ah Sing is uppermost in my thoughts. In the ancient books it is written in this wise. "Though the dragon live a thousand years, he returns to his den when the end is nigh. No matter what delightful clime he lay his head, when the time comes for him to take his leave, his thoughts return to the land of his birth. It is well that it be so, for he that has no love for the land of his birth, cannot be a loyal subject in the land of his adoption."

The following quote highlights an additional major difference between the Asian laboring class and that typified by Charlie Chan and the white middle class.

I have been thinking of Ah Sing who, while he has nothing, is probably most contented person in Ward household. Happiness is not obtained by increased material wealth but rather by making proper use of what we already possess and he who strives by force to increase his holdings, succeeds only in overburdening himself with worries.

The assumption is that members of the Asian laboring class really do not need much to meet their basic survival requirements. The fact that even with menial work and low wages they are able to send money back home to China is sufficient proof to reinforce his assumption to the Westerner. A life of austerity, devoid of material trappings, is typical and acceptable. As part of the closing of one of the shows, Charlie Chan observed:

Some men strive for riches and find the flavor of their success bitter to the taste. Other men desire power but find that in their strength they have disclosed their weakness. Still more seek fame only to learn that fame and bitterness go hand in hand. If man can look back on life's work and find that he has been trusted, that my friend, is life's greatest reward.

In other words, Orientals are presumed to believe that power, prestige, and wealth will not assure happiness, but that real joy lies in the family, a good reputation, and in the knowledge that one has been faithful.

Charlie Chan has a son that is both a source of pride and frustration. The son supposedly typifies the problems of many second-generation Asians in that they are impulsive, lack the stoic qualities of their parents, and speak English liberally sprinkled with slang. They are more likely to overlook the subtle qualities in a situation and take things and individuals at face value. The tug toward the old country is much weaker and the young Asian looks to America and his American peers for acceptance.

The Charlie Chan series clearly suggests that there is something

unique about the cognitive capacities of the Asian. The Asian has abilities to understand human nature that are less evident in the Occidental. The Oriental also has strong roots in Asia that he is never able to sever completely . Traditions extending back thousands of years are stronger than those extending back a mere 50 to 100 years. Physical labor is not a punishment resulting from the expulsion from the Garden of Eden but an opportunity to prove one's honesty and trustworthiness.

Charlie Chan once observed, "...A detective must not deal with probability. A detective should deal with facts yet, at the same time, must not hold facts so close to eyes as to blot out vision of details surrounding fact". The Asian's traditions encourage the development of a general perspective and the ability to see where the parts fit, no matter of how small the part.

Dr. Fu Manchu

Where Mr. Moto and Charlie Chan were committed to use the innate qualities of the Oriental to fight the forces of evil, Dr. Fu Manchu, also known as the "insidious Dr. Fu Manchu", used his Oriental genius malevolently. This was a relatively short run series originally broadcast in mid-1939. The character as described below was sinister and the theme music was designed to give a feeling of tension and foreboding.

Inspector Smith: "Petrie, I don't know when the blow will fall, or how, or from where. Never-the-less, our first duty is to warn him."

Dr. Petrie: "You know the criminal? Who is he?"

Inspector Smith: "The prince of evil, the ultimate expression of cunning, a superman of incredible genius, a phenomenon such as occurs once in generations. Had he so willed, he could have revolutionalized science, been the greatest scientist of our day."

Dr. Petrie: "Odd how some mental geniuses turn their talents to evil. But who is he? What does he look like?"

Inspector Smith: "Imagine a man tall, lean, and feline, high shouldered with an expansive brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan. A close shaven skull and long magnetic eyes of true cat green. Invest this personality with all the cruel cunning of an Eastern race accumulated in one great intellect and you have a picture of Dr. Fu Manchu."

When the thousands of years of Oriental cunning is used to further evil objectives, the Oriental character, in the words of the announcer, "...becomes the Yellow Peril threatening the good white world." Unlike Mr. Moto and Charlie Chan, Dr. Fu Manchu is highly educated, tall and imposing, has a high-pitched harsh voice with a strong Oriental accent. Like his two counterparts, however, he uses his incredible mind and Oriental wisdom to organize and motivate others to accomplish his objectives. His followers are fiercely loyal to their leader and not even the threat of death can force them to betray this loyalty. With incredible patience and cunning these oriental fiends will strike down anyone who is rash enough to confront them.

Inspector Smith: "When any great leader dares to arouse the West to a sense of the wakening of the East, he is destroyed."

In summary, the Asian radio star projects characteristics that are both a source of admiration and concern. The thousands of years of oriental wisdom and traditions coupled with the great patience and stoic unemotionalism seems to place the Asian at an advantage when dealing with the Occidental. The American may temporarily outdistance the Oriental but, like the slow steady systematic plodding of the tortoise, the Oriental with his eyes firmly fixed on the goal, will eventually win the race.

The Asian as a Supporting Character

There were two series where Asians appeared as major supporting characters. In the series "The Green Hornet" Kato, Britt Reid's faithful Philippino valet, starred. In "Have Gun, Will Travel", Heyboy, the houseboy of the Carlton Hotel, appeared at the beginning and end of each show. The two characters reflected very different images of the Asian. Kato knew the secrets of Oriental infighting and was smart. He had graduated from college, was a master chemist, could cook and care for the house, as well as care for the Hornet's car known as Black Beauty. Kato, when conversing with Britt Reid, had a definite oriental accent but his grammar was excellent. When answering the phone or conversing with others, however, his accent became more distinct, his English somewhat broken, and the image

projected very subserviant. Kato was portrayed as a partner of The Green Hornet. His position as a valet was more of a cover than a vocation. Kato was an excellent driver, an intelligent confidante, and a loyal companion and friend to Britt Reid. He possessed the natural intuitive cunning of the Oriental and on more than one occasion saved both life of the Green Hornet and his secret identity. Kato was such a close friend of Reid that he knew how Reid thought and could anticipate his needs and desires.

Heyboy, whose real name was Kim Chang, had a very heavy Chinese accent and spoke in broken English. The relationship between Heyboy and Paladin, the show's star, was cordial but cool. Heyboy was actively involved in the Chinese community of San Francisco. When problems arose in the oriental community, they became his problems. On more than one occasion, Paladin saved Heyboy or his friends from various toughs who were attempting to exploit or abuse Orientals. In one case Sing Woo, the proprietor of a laundry, had been robbed. Mr. Woo was described as a little old man with a seamed, ageless face, who spoke very little English but who understood a good deal. The robbers assumed that if a Chinaman could not speak English he could not understand it either, so they discussed their plans openly before him. Therefore Mr. Woo was able to tell Paladin through Heyboy how to locate them.

Heyboy had been in the United States long enough to become quite Americanized. He had a girl friend named Missy Wong who spoke in

sing-song broken English. Never-the-less, Chinese traditions and loyalties still held precedence as illustrated in a show devoted entirely to Heyboy and his arranged marriage to a girl in China (12-27-59).

Heyboy: "Thisee letter come from China today for Heyboy."

Paladin: "Oh, I see. Well, of course, I could probably make a more intelligent comment if I could read Chinese."

Heyboy: "Oh, Meestah Paladin. This letter is from ah, what you say, go-between."

Paladin: "Go between?"

Heyboy; "Yesah Meestah Paladin. Like a marriage broker. Thisee letter say go-between is come to San Francisco to settle arrangements for Heyboy's marriage to his betrothed."

Paladin: "Your marriage to your betrothed?"

Heyboy: "Yesah Meestah Paladin. That's what it says."

Paladin: "Well no wonder you did not want to face Miss Wong. Heyboy, do you think you have been exactly fair to her considering you're engaged to be married to a girl in China?"

Heyboy: "Oh, butuh, Heyboy forget all about engagement."

Paladin: "Now wait a minute. An engagement to marry is not the sort of thing that slips one's mind."

Heyboy: "Oh, Meestah Paladin, you no understand."

Paladin: "Well, should we try again?"

Heyboy: "Humm. Marriage contract made when Heyboy nine year old. Heyboy don't know girl, never see girl. Parents made deal."

Paladin: "Oh, like that!"

Heyboy: "When Heyboy fifteen, he come to America. Oh, so different. Many things happen. He forget. Heyboy like America. Heyboy like Missy Wong. But now come go-between to settle arrangements for marriage in China with girl Heyboy never seen. Heyboy must leave America, Heyboy must leave Missy Wong, and oh my."

Paladin: "But surely you're not obligated to go through with this thing?"

Heyboy: "Here is most distressing problem, Meestah Paladin. Heyboy's mother, father, now dead. But aunts, uncles, cousins, girl's father, mother, aunts, uncles, cousins all live in same village in China and Heyboy must do nothing to make lose face and.... Heyboy in pretty pickle, huh?"

Heyboy, regardless of his own feelings must not make his extended family lose face. He has a responsibility to the memory of his parents and to the social standing of his living relatives. These memories and responsibilities necessitate that he subjugate his own desires to those of the family and community. This same sense of responsibility got Heyboy involved in a number of Tong conflicts that he personally would have preferred to have avoided. But family needs always supersede individual desires.

The traditional flowery language of the Chinese not only gives a sense of deference, but is difficult to understand as illustrated below:

Missy Wong: "Thisee letter come for you."

Paladin: "Oh, thank you. Let's see. This is from Mr. Tsui Lee Sung."

Missy Wong: "He go-between. Come to make arrangements for Heyboy."

Paladin: "Huh. Lets see, now. To the Illustrious Great One who bears noble firearm and whose honorable will it is to journey forth always in benevolence yet reaping great treasure, will receive the lowly and inferior self of Tsui Lee Sung on the fifth day of the seventh moon of the fourteenth year of Kwong Su? What does that mean?"

Missy Wong: "He want to know if man who have gun will travel with Tsui Lee Sung week from next Tuesday?"

Paladin: "Why didn't he say so?"

Missy Wong: "He did."

Paladin: "Oh."

Though Oriental women rarely played a significant role on radio, Missy Wong's minor role showed that Oriental cunning was not considered to be limited to males. Knowing both the customs of her people and the "inner heart of a woman," Missy Wong sends Heyboy's intended bride a picture of a very ugly man with Heyboy's name on it. The direct result is that the intended bride to disgrace her entire family by running away and marrying someone in a rival but equally powerful Tong. Missy Wong though appearing to be timid, shy, and docile, is really very bright, cunning and manipulative. She once observed, "If you mess around with old Chinese customs, must fight all of China". Yet she is still able to accomplish her goals without directly violating Chinese traditions and customs.

In nearly every major western series, an Oriental appeared in one capacity or another. The Oriental was usually portrayed in a menial or subservant role. The occupations of Orientals were pretty well

limited to those of cook, handyman, laundry man, laborer, domestic, peddler, and small vegetable farmer. Virtually all Orientals were portrayed as having very limited education. Their English was very broken, and they dressed, and acted in traditional Oriental ways and wooooore the mandatory pigtail. They tended to restrict their socializing to the Oriental community but made dedicated and fiercely loyal employees. It was the lack of formal education along with the deference shown other that resulted in the frequent portrayal of the Asian as being quite gullible. Heyboy, for example, once bought a fake gold brick as an investment in one episode and another time a fake treasure map. Paladin was constantly exasperated by his Oriental friend's naivete. Presumably trust and unfamiliarity with the American culture could cloud the cunning Orientals perspectives.

The Oriental, because of his placing the needs of the community above his own desires, was often portrayed as being very self-sacrificing. When the the Bubonic Plague broke out in the dock area of San Francisco's Chinatown the mayor of the city, who placed great importance on the preservation of property, refused to order wholesale destruction of part of the city in order to stop the plague. However when the Lone Ranger went to the leaders of the Chinese community and informed them of the need to blow up many of their houses and businesses to stop the spread of the infected rats, they willingly agreed.

The typical oriental community was also portrayed as having a

criminal side. The Tongs tended to be associated with this negative side of the Chinese community. The Tong in the United States is an extension of the Tong in China. When Chinese families become involved in a dispute, regardless of where they live, all family members and friends also become involved automatically. Thus the image of blind allegiance and obedience to custom and tradition is clearly projected.

A second element in this dark side related to the perceived opportunity structure in the United States. Jobs that were not available in Asia were available in the United States and the extreme frugality of Orientals enabled them to feed and clothe themselves plus family members remaining in China. As a result they were willing to come to the United States as virtual slaves, laboring long hours at miniscule wages. Among those who reached the United States were inevitably some criminals and these individuals were responsible for introducing the opium den to this country. Thus drugs, and the evils of drug addiction were often associated with the Asian community. In "The Sign of the Broken Thumb" (Episode #907), the Lone Ranger was discussing the slave labor problems in the Chinese community and the upcoming Chinese festival, the Feast Of The Lamb with a local California lawman. The lawman commented that he had never cared for foreigners. When informed that their contact was a naturalized American citizen, the lawman said that he agreed with Kipling, that "...that East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." This observation implies that Asians will always be Asians regardless of how long they stay in America. They might become

acculturated but they will never become assimilated.

In the various detective, mystery and drama series, the Oriental image reflected the same divergent attitudes and feelings. In the Shanghai Document (Escape, 4-21-50), China was described as a land of poverty, filth, teeming masses, and death. The people were described as having faces that reflected the great patience worn by the have-nots of the world. The major character was surprised that even these poverty stricken people had a great respect for personal property. In the series "Cloak and Dagger" (7-02-50), the key character was flown to Siam to help rescue a downed member of the famous "Flying Tigers." He discovered that the Siamese people, now known as Thai, were very resentful of their Japanese invaders, yet did nothing to resist them. A leader of the country informed him that patience was their greatest virtue and weapon.

"When overrun by the Japanese, we recognized that there was little we could do, so we accepted them. The Japanese do not understand our ways so it is easy for us to convince them that we are loyal puppets. We act as a docile puppet state until the time is right to strike, then strike the fatal blow to the invader. Time is on the side of the Siamese, not the Japanese."

Evidently there is more than one variety of inscrutable Asians. Many Americans assume that Orientals are able to read each others' body and symbolic verbal language. In the case of the Siamese and the Japanese, the Japanese were supposed to be unable to read the Siamese which made it possible for counterespionage to occur at the highest level of the Siamese government. The carryover of negative feelings

toward Japan was clearly reflected in this series. The image of the cunningly sadistic and malevolent Japanese military was counterpointed with the gentle, graceful, and beautiful people portrayed in the classic movie, *Anna and the King of Siam*. Thus the cunning of evil and despicable Asians is pitted against that of righteous benevolent Asians. This series portrays both the positive and negative stereotypes of the Asian character. The Siamese, being "good," were typified as having the patience of the just. They were more patient, more cunning and more in control of their emotions than the enemy. Even when the Japanese conducted random executions to intimidate and break the Siamese spirit, the Siamese did not reveal their real feelings. In fact, the harsher the treatment received, the greater their resolve to patiently wait for the moment when their retaliation would be the most damaging to the Japanese. What is interesting here is the fact that during World War II, Japan and Siam were actually allies. Perhaps the directors were attempting to use images with which the typical American listener could identify since most Americans were familiar with the Siamese, while the Vietnamese and Indonesians were relatively unknown.

Summary

It is quite clear that the the Asian character as portrayed on various radio series reflected not only individual concerns but the condition of world affairs of the time. The impact of World War II was declining, the concern with world Communism was rising, and

America's Asian alliances were shifting. To a degree, the Asian image as projected on the radio reflected the concern and awareness of the potential impact the Asian had and was having on world politics. Yet the Asian was still mysterious and an anathema to some. Many Americans have a very limited sense of history as attention is directed toward the future. Change and modernization is prized over tradition and antiquity. The perceived patience and unhurried pace of the Oriental life style; the ability of the Oriental to persevere until a goal is achieved; and the allegiance of the Oriental to his ancestors, traditions, and home country are both a source of admiration and concern. Historical radio broadcasts are a vast treasure chest of unmined historical data. Much can be learned from these shows about the tenor of the times what it was like to live during the depression, the sacrifices that were made during World War II, and some of the problems immigrants faced when they arrived in this country and on and on.

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